

VZCZCXYZ0000  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTV #2080/01 2610616  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 180616Z SEP 09  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3513  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAHQA/HQ USAF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEADWD/DA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/CNO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 5980  
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 2554  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 6572  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 6790  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 6037  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 4664  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 6884  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3658  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1873  
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 0544  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 8058  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 3068  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 7050  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 9106  
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 1873  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 2808  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002080

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR X0XX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS  
E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: SPECIAL ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

-----  
SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
-----

U.S. Special Envoy Sen. George Mitchell to Israel, West Bank

-----  
Key stories in the media:  
-----

Leading media reported that in a Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) greeting to Jews the world over, President Barack Obama called for the rejection of the "impulse to harden ourselves to others' suffering," urging empathy and "compassion to those in need." The first African-American President (in HaQaretsQs words) also called

for resistance to "prejudice, intolerance and indifference" and for a strong stance against what he described as "the scourge of anti-Semitism, which is still prevalent in far too many corners of our world." Obama also expressed the desire to "work to achieve lasting peace and security for the state of Israel, so that the Jewish state is fully accepted by its neighbors, and its children can live their dreams free from fear." Yediot noted that, for the first time, the President's greeting was also translated into Hebrew (QShana shel Shalom Uvitahon LeYisraelQ Q a Year of Peace and Security for Israel.)

The media reported that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace Senator George Mitchell will meet today (Maariv's headline: QThis Morning: Fateful Meeting Between Netanyahu and Envoy MitchellQ) in order to determine whether a tripartite meeting including Obama and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, will take place next week at the U.N. General Assembly. The hope is that the three-way meeting will serve as a catalyst for restarting the negotiations between Israel and the PA. Senior U.S. officials told HaQaretz yesterday that today's meeting will resolve all differences in order to open the door for holding talks in New York. Netanyahu told Channel 2-TV in a special Jewish New Year interview: QQIf it [the summit] will be, it will be. If not, not. I didn't ask for it, and I didn't put conditions on the talks.Q The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe banners: QToday Mitchell Will Pressure: Concede for the Summit's Sake.Q The Palestinians are refusing to meet with Netanyahu unless he declares a comprehensive freeze on settlement activity, including in East Jerusalem. HaQaretz reported that Mitchell also met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and King Abdullah II of Jordan during his current visit to the region, and asked them to exert pressure on Abbas to soften his stance so that a meeting can take place at the U.N. Mitchell also reportedly asked the two Arab leaders to rally the Arab world in undertaking goodwill gestures toward Israel.

Last night, in interviews with Israeli TV stations on the occasion of the Jewish New Year, which starts tonight, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected a U.N. report (the QGoldstone reportQ) alleging Israeli war crimes during its three-week offensive in Gaza last winter, warning world leaders that they and their anti-terror forces could be targets for similar charges. He said that the report ignored Israel's 2005 withdrawal from Gaza and the Palestinian rocket attacks that preceded Israel's invasion, adding that lessons must be learned for future agreements with the Palestinians. "I am telling international leaders: You are telling us that you support our right of self defense. Don't tell us that after the next agreement, tell us now. Reject the findings of this commission," Netanyahu told Channel 2-TV. "Come out now, condemn this report and act to quash its consequences now," he went on to say. Netanyahu called on the world to oppose the conclusion that formal charges could be brought against Israeli soldiers, officers and leaders as a result of the Gaza war. He said it was a blow to the fight against terrorism and warned that other countries could find their soldiers and leaders in the dock as the result of anti-terror operations. HaQaretz reported that late last night, Netanyahu spoke with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, asking for his support in curbing the effects of the Goldstone report. Netanyahu stressed that the report's conclusions compromise Russia's capability to combat terrorism, as well as Israel's. HaQaretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that earlier Thursday, Susan Rice, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., criticized the U.N. Human Rights Council for giving an "unacceptable" mandate to the fact-finding mission in Gaza. Rice was quoted as saying that Washington has had "serious concerns" about the mandate given to the Goldstone-led four-member mission by the Geneva-based council. The U.S. officially took its seat in the 46-member body in early September. "We have long expressed our very serious concerns about the mandate given by the Human Rights Council prior to our joining it," Rice was quoted as saying in her first reaction to the mission's findings by. "We view the mandate as ... one-sided and basically unbalanced," she was quoted as saying. She also objected to Goldstone's recommendations, including one for the 15-nation Security Council to investigate and refer the war crimes to the International Criminal Court at The Hague. Rice urged both Israelis and Palestinians to look to the future in order to resolve their conflict.

Unrelated to the Goldstone mission, HaQaretz's Washington correspondent noted that Ambassador Rice is required to convince the

world that President Obama really wants to open a new foreign policy chapter.

Major media reported that experts at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) acknowledge, in a secret report obtained by The Associated Press, that Tehran is capable of making a nuclear weapon and that it is developing a missile system that can deliver a nuclear warhead. The document affirms what Israel, the U.S., and other western countries have maintained for some time regarding the real purpose of Iran's nuclear program, which Tehran has touted as having peaceful purposes. According to the document, which Washington reportedly says is being withheld by the IAEA's outgoing chief, Mohamed ElBaradei, Iran has "sufficient information" to build a bomb. It also says Iran is likely to "overcome problems" on developing a delivery system -- which means Tehran will be able to mount a warhead on a ballistic missile capable of striking western targets. Israel Radio quoted Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as saying in an interview with NBC that his country does not intend to arm itself with nuclear weapons.

IAF Commander Maj. Gen. Ido Nehushtan was quoted as saying in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that Israel needs to make every possible effort to stop the Russian-made S-300 missile defense system from reaching counties where the Air Force may need to fly. Nehushtan also defended Israel's choice of targets in Operation Cast Lead.

HaQaretz reported that, despite the United States' demand to suspend construction in the West Bank, building is continuing in at least one settlement Q Beitar Illit.

The Jerusalem Post cited the IDF's denial that it is refusing to process Gazans' applications for medical treatment.

Maariv disclosed that in indirect talks held in Turkey, Syrian President Bashar Assad asked former PM Ehud Olmert to draw the anticipated border between the two countries.

Leading media reported that yesterday the Counter-Terrorism Bureau at Israel's National Security Council issued a severe terror warning for India. It said that a Pakistani terror organization affiliated with al-Qaida and responsible for the attacks in Mumbai last year is planning to carry out a string of attacks throughout the Indian subcontinent. The warning said that while all westerners in India are in peril of being targeted, Israelis and places where Israelis usually congregate in large numbers are in more serious danger. The bureau asked all Israelis in India to steer clear of places where Western tourists are found in large numbers. It put a special emphasis on Chabad ultra-Orthodox houses, which are popular with Israeli tourists, especially during the High Holidays (the period from the Jewish New Year through Sukkoth). The bureau rated the threat as "imminent and concrete," and pointed specifically at the Jammu and Kashmir regions in India's North. The Jerusalem Post noted that the warning was unusual, as India is a friendly country and there are tens of thousands of Israelis in India at any given time.

The media reported that yesterday President Obama abruptly canceled plans for a long-anticipated missile shield system for Eastern Europe on Thursday, replacing a Bush-era project that was bitterly opposed by Russia with a plan he contended would better defend against a growing threat of Iranian missiles. The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel Space Agency Chairman and former Kadima Knesset Member Professor Yitzhak Ben-Israel told the newspaper yesterday that there is no need to be alarmed by President Obama's decision and that it is ultimately good for Israel that there are improved relations between Russia and the U.S. Maariv quoted a senior Israeli defense source as saying that Qthis will represent a step forward in the defense of Israel's skies.Q Conversely, a panel of experts talking on Channel 10-TV saw possible negative long-term implications of the move for Israel's defenses. Akin to other commentators, HaQaretz's intelligence affairs analyst Yossi Melman characterizes Obama's decision as Qappeasement without getting anything in exchange.Q Maariv's Europe correspondent Nadav Eyal says that the American announcement is a big victory for the Putin-Medvedev regime.

-----

Block Quotes:

---

I. QWhat Are We Thinking?

The independent, left-leaning HaQaretz editorialized (September 18): QThis [past Jewish] year, following the establishment of Benjamin Netanyahu's government and the change of power in the White House, it seems Israel has taken giant steps backward, incredibly quickly. Hated, bitter, violent, hamstrung by self-righteousness, wallowing in its sense of victimization -- with its sole strange comfort being that none of this is our fault, but actually the result of international anti-Semitism. In this sense then, the Goldstone Commission report on Operation Cast Lead, which accuses Israel of war crimes and even of Qcrimes against humanity,Q has come at the worst possible time. And not only because it is a QbitterQ holiday present. Its unprecedented severity gives strong backing not only to the those who are enemies of Israel, but also to the pessimistic, fatalistic attitude that guides the current government in Israel -- the same government which is busy gathering evidence of anti-Semitism, and looking for reasons to withdraw into the ghetto of our self-righteousness rather than searching for ways to become a normal nation in an ever-changing region and world. One such way, for example, would be to honestly and courageously investigate our actions, and determine whether Qethics,Q for us, is not just an empty word. But even without examining the facts and motives that appear in this difficult report, we can say that the terribly emotional responses it is stirring in Israel -- with the support of its leadership and its tabloid media, including the demand that it be rejected entirely -- are no more than the other side of the coin of the verbal frenzy and indignation that originally motivated Operation Cast Lead. Israel is an emotional, hot-tempered nation, loaded with deep traumas and justified fears. But its leadership is expected to behave rationally, coolly and intelligently when confronted with real crises, not to blatantly encourage fear and bitterness, as Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman tend to do out of a pessimistic and self-fulfilling approach. Hopefully, the Israeli Government will start using more of its head and less of its gut.

II. QGoldstone Has Made Things More Difficult for Mitchell

Diplomatic correspondent Herb Keinon wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (9/18): QIf Mitchell thought it was rough getting the Arab world to make normalization gestures before Goldstone issued his report alleging Israeli war crimes in Gaza, then one can only imagine how difficult it will be now.... So if the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world were not exactly chomping at the bit to do their part to get the negotiations under way before Goldstone, now they will be even more reluctant.... And it is not only the Arabs who will be influenced by the report. As Netanyahu made clear in his television interviews Thursday night, the report does not exactly give Israel confidence that if it withdraws from further territory, the world will recognize its right to self defense. Mitchell's job, as everyone realized from the outset, would be an extremely difficult one. Goldstone just made it even more so.

III. QHow to Perpetuate the Conflict in One Easy Move

Veteran journalist Evelyn Gordon wrote in The Jerusalem Post (9/17): QThere are reasons to fear that [ President ObamaQs rumored peace plan] might be true. First, Washington has not denied it. Second, it accords with Obama's known desire to create a Palestinian state within two years, thus assuring him of one foreign policy success in what otherwise looks likely to be an unbroken string of failures. Third, it would appease his left-wing base, which is currently furious at him over issues ranging from the QsurgeQ in Afghanistan to his apparent willingness to make concessions to moderates on health care reform. Fourth, it would please the EU and the Muslim world, and Obama has made better relations with both a major goal of his foreign policy. Finally, he has even found a way to avoid alienating his big-ticket Jewish donors: The media reports market the plan as being based, inter alia, on ideas presented by Israel's very own president, Shimon Peres. Indeed, the plan has only one

drawback: Far from bringing peace, it would perpetuate the conflict for all eternity. If 16 years of deadly terror combined with refusing to budge an inch on any of their demands could produce such stellar results, why would any Palestinian want to abandon these successful tactics? Thus they will continue the terror, and Israel will continue its counterterrorism operations.... It would require massive self-centeredness, and massive short-sightedness, to sacrifice any chance of lasting peace for the sake of a momentary foreign policy achievement. But that is exactly what this plan would do.

#### IV. What's the Alarm?

Deputy Editor-in-Chief Uri Elitzur, who was director of the Prime Minister's Office during Netanyahu's first term, wrote a missive to Netanyahu on page one of the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe (9/18): "You are about to meet George Mitchell today -- a meeting that media commentators term decisive. Israelis are being threatened with a rift with America and many disasters if you don't give in to all the demands.... It may be unpleasant to disappoint the U.S. President, but you know that this is neither the end of the world nor a diplomatic catastrophe.... Obama ultimately knows, too, that the man who refuses to take part in a summit is Abu Mazen."

#### V. A Year of Peace with Our Neighbors

Popular, liberal columnist and television anchor Yair Lapid wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (9/18): "Dear Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad.... In the coming year, I wish you to succeed in creating in Palestine a society such as the one you describe: an open, western society that does not engage in incitement, a society that believes in democracy and nurtures religious and civil tolerance. If you succeed in doing so, believe me: Israelis will be all right, too. Happy New Year to you."

CUNNINGHAM